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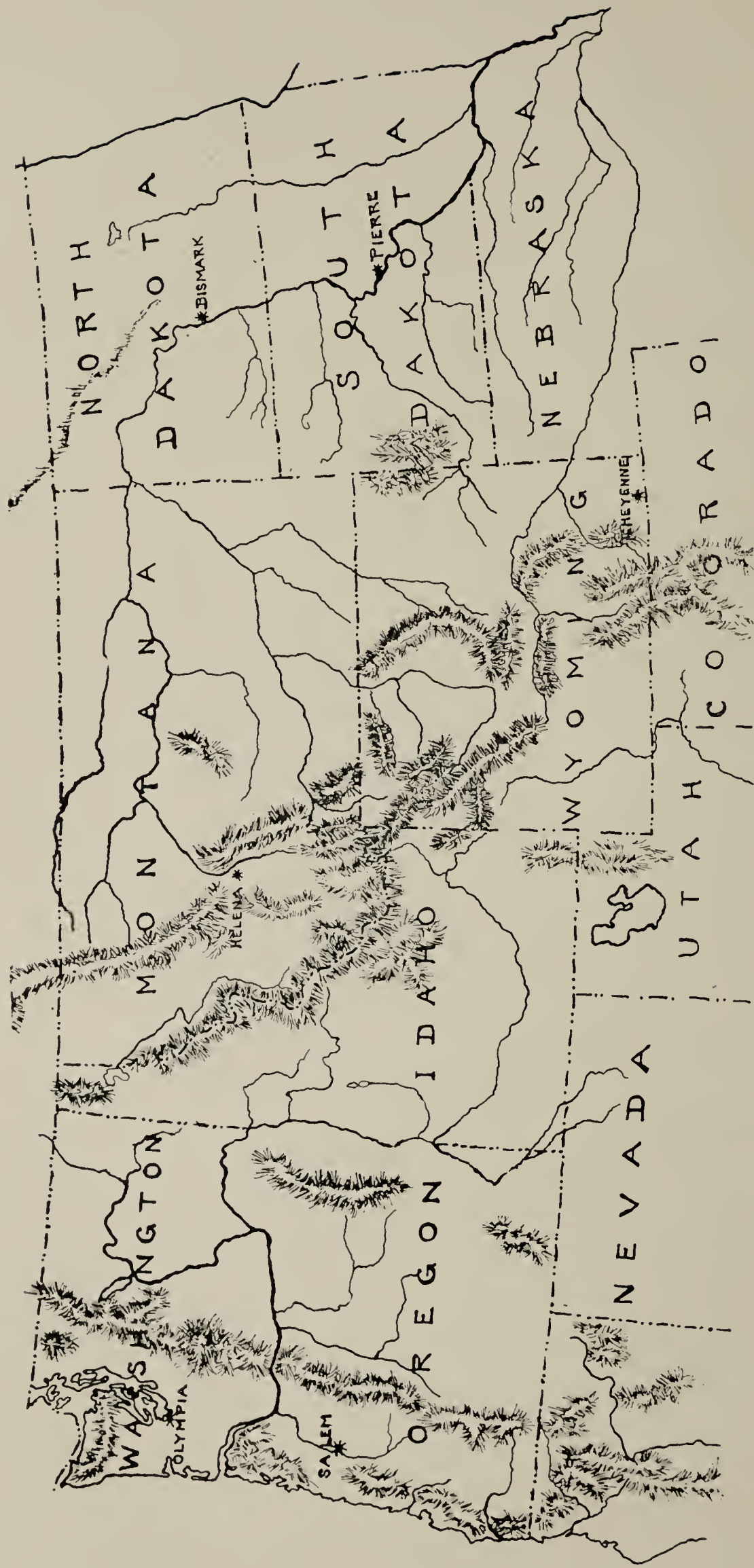
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The admission of the "Omnibus" States
1889-90

By Frederic Logan Paxson, Ph. D.

[From the Proceedings of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin for 1911,
pages 77-96]

Madison
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THE OMNIBUS STATES

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The American Invasion

"Probably nothing can equal American avarice and enterprise," wrote the late Thomas Collier Platt, an excellent judge of both, when he visited the 15,000 inhabitants of the Black Hills region in 1878 and found a third of them bustling about their business in the city of Deadwood. Less than ten years previously the waters of the Cheyenne had been dedicated to the Sioux, and had been a part of the consideration when they had confirmed the rights of way to the railroads. Now the last region of the great plains had been broken in upon, Custer had already gone to the Little Big Horn, and in all the northern territories the uneasy forerunners of the American invasion had begun to stake their claims. What they were to accomplish in the next twelve years no man could say. Prophetic though they were, few pioneers anticipated the six states which were to be added to the Union after the passage of another territorial "omnibus" bill. Yet before the election of 1890, unbroken commonwealths filled the gap between the borders of Minnesota and Puget Sound.

As early as 1868, Dakota, Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, and Washington had all been organized as territories, but into none had population begun to flow freely. Remote and inaccessible, often uninviting and frequently crowded with Indian reserves,

¹ Letter, Nov. 14, 1878, to the New York *Daily Tribune*, reprinted in L. J. Lang, *Autobiography of Thomas Collier Platt* (N. Y., 1910), p. 44.

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these regions had lain away from the great trails and beyond the agricultural frontier. The Oregon trail had skirted their southern border. Changed into the Union Pacific railroad, the trail still pushed them one side. But with this railroad working throughout in 1869, the forces had begun to play which were to reduce the territories in the end. Mining, grazing, and agriculture, inspired by enterprise and avarice, and made practicable by the new railways, were the prosaic tools in the reclamation of this northern third of the last American frontier.

From the organization of these territories, of which only Washington antedated the War of Secession, until the United States emerged from the depressing effects of the panic of 1873, few indications of permanent establishment were to be found. Sparsely populated, with few taxables and little concrete wealth, the territories remained the borderland of civilization. They were the real "wild west." The cowboy and the miner were scarcely more numerous than the Indians themselves. Missionary bishops struggled with the refractory human material, finding much of that substantial but unadorned virtue that has resided in every frontier population, yet making almost no progress in their efforts to guide it into the ways of orthodox society.²

The Northern Pacific Railway

In the years immediately preceding the panic of 1873, work was begun on that northernmost of the land-grant continental railways which was predestined to serve the northwest territories. Asa Whitney had projected it, and Gov. Isaac I. Stevens had in 1853 surveyed its approximate route;³ Josiah Perham had lobbied for it in the years succeeding; Jay Cooke had made its finance a possibility. But until long after Cooke and his friends had selected the site for the eastern extremity of the road, and had begun their real estate speculations around Duluth, its projected course traversed a region of swamp, forest, prairie land,

² D. S. Tuttle, *Reminiscences of a Missionary Bishop* (New York, 1906); E. Talbot, *My People of the Plains* (N. Y., 1906).

³ For the reports of Governor Stevens, see Pacific Railroad reports, 32d Cong., 2d sess., *Sen. Ex. Doc.* no. 73, serial 758, vol. i; and 35th Cong., 2d sess., *Sen. Ex. Doc.* no. 46, serial 992, supplement to vol. i.

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and mountains which had scarcely changed its aspect since the century of its mythical Norse explorers.⁴ Duluth, on Lake Superior, and Tacoma, on Puget Sound, were the chosen gateways to the northern West. Between them, a few farmers on the Red River, a few miners along the continental divide in Idaho and Montana, represented the population to be served. The ultimate successes of the road depended upon the creative work which the road itself should do.

The panic of 1873 wrecked the banking house of Jay Cooke and brought postponement and reorganization to the Northern Pacific, as to most other economic enterprises in the United States. Under Frederick Billings, in 1878-79, the road revived; under Henry Villard it was in the autumn of 1883 pushed to a triumphant conclusion, adorned with oratory and feasting. Already, in anticipation of its coming, settlers had begun to line its right of way; town-sites, ranches, and banks had become the objects of eager speculation, while railroads had been aided by local communities which had already begun the repudiation of their obligations. Change, not creeping but rushing madly, was crossing the continent.

Talk of Statehood

In Dakota, the legislature at Yankton had determined to shift the seat of government and had created a commission which had accepted the invitation of the town of Bismarck, where the new railway crossed the Missouri River, and where the great railway bridge had recently been completed.⁵ Here the festal train of Henry Villard⁶ stopped long enough in September, 1883, to lay the corner-stone of a prairie capitol, in a village so generously planned that in thirty years it has not grown to fit its swaddling clothes. "The confidence of these Westerns is superb," wrote James Bryce, who visited Bismarck at this time. "Men seem to live in the future rather than in the present: not that they fail

⁴ E. P. Oberholtzer, *Jay Cooke, Financier of the Civil War* (Phila., 1907), ii, ch. 14-18.

⁵ Gov. N. G. Ordway "Annual Report" for 1883, in 48th Cong., 1st sess., *House Ex. Doc.* no. i, serial 2191, pp. 526-536.

⁶ *Memoirs of Henry Villard, Journalist and Financier* (Cambridge, 1904), ii, p. 311.

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to work while it is called today, but that they see the country not merely as it is, but as it will be, twenty, fifty, a hundred years hence, when the seedlings shall have grown to forest trees.' ' 7

From the census tables of 1880 may be extracted the condition of the five northern territories on the eve of the opening of the railroad. Washington, westernmost and oldest, occupied the area to which it had been reduced upon the organization of Idaho in 1863. Lying between the Columbia River and Puget Sound, it had begun to develop villages along its water front. The great fields of the Spokane country had hardly been realized. The timber of the mountains was still without a market. And though it was the second of the five territories in point of population, it had attracted only 75,116 inhabitants by 1880. Dakota, easternmost of the five, boasted nearly half the total population in 1880, with her 135,177. Intermediate between Dakota and Washington, the three mountain territories of Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming, had respectively 32,610, 39,159, and 20,789. In the aggregate, 302,851 inhabitants were scattered over about one-sixth of the total area of the United States.⁸ From the Missouri River to the Columbia the trail remained their chief bond of communication. They possessed 2,279 miles of railroads.⁹ In the next ten years the total population swelled to 1,138,166,¹⁰ while 8,673 miles of railroad were added to their equipment.

The talk of statehood had been eard at times within the territories, immature though they were. Washington had been hopeful since the census of 1860 had counted her 11,594 pioneers,¹¹ and had met in 1878 in an unauthorized constitutional convention at Walla Walla.¹² Even thus early the northern counties of Idaho cast in their lot with the western neighbor, and the pro-

⁷ James Bryce, *The American Commonwealth* (3d ed., 1895), ii, pp. 836, 837.

⁸ *Tenth Census of the United States*, vol. "Population," i, p. 4.

⁹ R. P. Porter, *The West from the Census of 1880* (Chicago, 1882), p. 84.

¹⁰ *Eleventh Census of United States*, vol. "Population," i, p. 2.

¹¹ *Ibid*, p. 2.

¹² Clinton A. Snowden, *History of Washington, the Rise and Progress of an American State* (N. Y., 1909), iv, p. 263.

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posed Washington constitution annexed the "panhandle" with the consent of its inhabitants.

In Congress, however, there was little disposition to admit new states. Colorado had come in in 1876, and since its last territorial delegate, Thomas M. Patterson, was a Democrat, there had been a hope that it would cast three electoral votes for the Democratic candidate for president. Without its three, which were thrown against Tilden, General Hayes never could have made a successful contest for the office, and the course of history might have been changed. The two following congresses, with Democrats in control of the lower house, were indisposed to create more Republican electoral votes to weaken their fair chance of success. Not until the election of 1880 gave over to the Republican party all branches of the national government for the two years of the Forty-seventh Congress, was there even a chance for statehood movements. Organized and developed under Republican tutelage, in a time when the struggle with the South emphasized the meaning of party distinctions, these territories were in strong sympathy with the party whose creatures they were. In the Forty-seventh Congress an attempt to admit one of them received at least a hearing.

The Struggle over Dakota

Dakota was the text upon which most of the statehood arguments were preached during the eighties. Largest in population and nearest the East, if she might not come in, no territory could hope for entrance. In the debates on the numerous Dakota bills the friends of the other territories, north or south, interjected their local pleas. Nearly one-third of the total area of the United States was still under the arbitrary dominion of Congress. Utah, Arizona, New Mexico, and Indian Territory added their weight to the general movement that was headed by the territories of the northern group.

In both houses of Congress bills for the admission of Dakota were debated during the winter of 1882.¹³ Popular conventions at Sioux Falls and Canton had demanded an enabling act, which

¹³ Majority and minority reports on "House Bill 4456" are in 47th Cong., 1st sess., *House Rep.* no. 450, pts. 1 and 2, serial 2066.

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many were disposed to grant. "I believe that all the objections which have been hitherto urged against the passage of that bill are purely partisan and malignant," declared Ingalls, of Kansas, after the debate was over. "I have no doubt that if the population of Dakota was not well known to be distinctively Republican * * * that bill would have been long ago acted upon."¹⁴ In support of its memorials the Dakota population flooded Congress with argumentative material upon the resources of the territory, the size of its growing population, the virtue of its citizens, and their ideals and the number of its newspapers, schools, and churches. But when Hale, of Maine, urged that admission ought to be deferred because the county of Yankton had shamelessly repudiated an issue of its railroad bonds,¹⁵ Vest, of Missouri, voiced his fears "that the people of the proposed State have neglected the religious and moral advantages so conspicuously set forth in their pamphlet,"¹⁶ and the bill failed to get through the senate.

Dakota maintained a running fight for statehood from 1882 to 1889. Despite the failure of her bill in Congress both houses of her legislature of 1883 passed an act for holding a constitutional convention, and though this act did not receive the approval of Governor Ordway an unofficial convention based upon it met at Huron in June to memorialize Congress for the division of the territory and the admission of the southern half.¹⁷ A subsequent convention at Sioux Falls in September, 1883, framed a constitution. Division of the territory had long been contemplated and was well-nigh universally accepted. Three widely separated groups of inhabitants had come into existence. In the

¹⁴ 47th Cong., 2d sess., *Cong. Record*, Jan. 5, 1883, p. 870.

¹⁵ The protest of the holders of Yankton County bonds is in 47th Cong., 1st sess., *Sen. Misc. Doc.* no. 68, serial 1993. Cf. "First National Bank of Brunswick, Me., vs. County of Yankton," 101 U. S. 129.

¹⁶ Minority report on "Senate Bill 1514," in 47th Cong., 1st sess., *Sen. Rep.* no. 271, pt. 2, serial 2004, p. 3. The repudiation is discussed in *Cong. Record*, Mar. 27, 1882, p. 2277.

¹⁷ The memorial of the committee of the convention is in 50th Cong., 1st sess., *House Rep.* no. 709, serial 2600, p. 85. The text of the act is given, *Ibid*, p. 89. Ordway explained his refusal to approve the act in his annual report for 1883 found in 48th Cong., 1st sess., *House Ex. Doc.* no. 1, serial 2191, pp. 523-526.

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Red River Valley lay a population that had originated in the ambitious schemes of Selkirk, and that now constituted an overflow from Minnesota.¹⁸ On the southeast border, touching Minnesota and Iowa, and ascending the valleys of the Big Sioux, Vermillion, James, and Missouri, a second population was so far from the valley of the Red that no community of interest was felt. West of this, the mining camps of the Black Hills might conceivably become the basis for a third commonwealth, and certainly had nothing in common with Grand Falls, or Fargo, and the wheat fields of the north. The projected line of the Northern Pacific increased the tendencies to disunion in the territory, and gave a temporary advantage to the northern half when Bismarck became the new territorial capital. In this proposed division the Democratic opposition found its most used, if not most sincere argument against statehood.

The measure which had failed of passage in 1882, because of the intervention of Senator Hale, was not debated seriously during the Forty-seventh Congress, nor until the second session of the Forty-eighth. In March, 1884, the senate committee on territories brought in, with a favorable report, a bill for the admission of the southern half as Dakota.¹⁹ For the new name to be applied to the northern half, after rejecting Pembina, Mandan, Garfield, Jefferson, Ogalalla, Franklin, and Hidasta, the committee had agreed on Lincoln. On December 9, 1884, Benjamin Harrison, then chairman of the committee on territories, called up this measure, which passed the senate a week later by a strictly party vote. In the desultory debate upon the bill, Harrison pointed out that all the "conditions of emigration have changed. The emigrant who is seeking a home in the West does not now use as his vehicle a pack-train, a Conestoga wagon, or even a broad-horn. The great bulk of the people who have gone

¹⁸ A bill for a territory of North Dakota was reported favorably in 1882, 47th Cong., 1st sess., *House Rep.* no. 552, serial 2066. The sale of postage stamps, etc., in the northern half amounted in the year ending June 30, 1880, to \$30,540.03; for the half-year ending Dec. 31, 1881, it was \$31,787.66. *Ibid*, p. 1.

¹⁹ 48th Cong., 1st sess., *Sen. Rep.* no. 320, serial 2174. An elaborate report on the condition of the Crow and Sioux of Montana (*Sen. Rep.* no. 283), fills 404 pages of this volume.

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into Dakota have gone upon the steam-car, many of them within sight of the home which they were to take up under the homestead laws of the United States * * * whereas in the case of the state of Indiana it was thirty years after the admission of that State into the Union before a single mile of railroad was built in its territory.''²⁰ The Democratic opposition to the bill dwelt upon the injustice of dividing the territory, and professed not to see the general demand which had planned for a division for at least ten years. The bill was smothered in the Democratic house of representatives, although the annual report of Governor Pierce had shown that, on the score of population at least, both halves of Dakota were amply entitled to admission.²¹

Before Congress again took up the affairs of Dakota, that territory had both exhibited further signs of life and been shown to be well within the farthest American frontier. Since 1870 its northern neighbor, Manitoba, had been a state in the Canadian Dominion, into which (in 1873) British Columbia also was admitted. The latter province had placed as the price for its entrance the completion of a railroad which should render Canada independent of the United States. In November, 1885, Donald A. Smith drove the last spike of the Canadian Pacific, which established a new railroad frontier beyond the limits of any of the northern territories of the United States.²² Within Dakota, in the same year, the statehood progress had gained momentum. Not content with the work of the extra-legal convention of 1883, the territorial legislature authorized on March 9, 1885, the formation of another constitution. For this purpose a convention assembled at Sioux Falls on September 8, 1885, chose A. J. Edgerton, a former United States senator from Minnesota, as president, and adjourned on September 25 after completing a constitution

²⁰ 48th Cong., 2d sess., *Cong. Record*, Dec. 9, 1884, p. 109. Senator Vest spoke against the bill on Dec. 10. *Ibid*, p. 142.

²¹ An. Rep. for 1884, of Gov. Gilbert A. Pierce in 48th Cong., 2d sess., *House Ex. Doc.* no. 1, serial 2287, pp. 540-542.

²² B. Willson, *Lord Strathcona* (London, 1902), p. 208; A. Begg, *History of the Northwest* (Toronto, 1895), iii, pp. 66-79; F. B. Tracy, *Tercentenary History of Canada* (Toronto, 1908), iii, pp. 966-978; A. L. Haydon, *Riders of the Plains* (London, 1910), pp. 102-120.

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which once more provided for the division of the territory.²³ Ratified in November by an overwhelming majority, this constitution was ready for the Forty-ninth Congress when it assembled in the following month, and remained the basis of the South Dakota movement until the end. Dakota was booming, and though the myth of the "banana belt" had been dispelled the possibilities of the Red River Valley as the home of "No. 1, hard wheat"²⁴ were gaining recognition; diversified agriculture, even, was being attempted; James J. Hill had begun his experiment in the improvement of livestock by the distribution of imported bulls.

The United States senate, under Republican control, had in 1884 been quite ready to admit Dakota. Early in 1886 Harrison again brought up the project in the form of a bill to admit under the Sioux Falls constitution.²⁵ Despite the Democratic insistence that division was only an unworthy partisan dodge, the bill passed the senate; the house once more stifled the measure. Unable however to justify the exclusion of Dakota on its merits, William M. Springer, Democratic chairman of the house committee on territories, reported for party purposes, on May 25, 1886, a bill to admit Dakota as a single state.²⁶

The Democratic opposition found its excuse in what it interpreted to be the real desire of the people of Dakota. The Sioux Falls convention had again assembled in July, 1886, to beg that Congress finish the matter at the current session, but it had prayed in vain.²⁷ The final session of the Forty-ninth Congress adjourned with action still unreached and the Democratic party

²³ The act of March 9, the memorial to Congress, and the constitution of 1885 are printed in 49th Cong., 1st sess., *Sen. Rep.* no. 15, serial 2355, pp. 22-68.

²⁴ Joel Benton, "The Home of the Blizzard," in *Cosmopolitan*, Mar. 1887, p. 13; R. D. Paine, *The Greater America* (N. Y., 1907), p. 95.

²⁵ His report contains many documents and gives a review of the statehood movement. 49th Cong., 1st sess., *Sen. Rep.* no. 15, serial 2355, pp. 1-75.

²⁶ 49th Cong., 1st sess., *House Rep.* no. 2577, serial 2442. Adverse reports on various bills dividing Dakota were made at the same time. *Ibid.*, No. 2578-2580, serial 2443.

²⁷ The memorial, dated July 14, 1886, again demanded division. *Ibid.*, *Sen. Misc. Doc.* no. 144, serial 2346.

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still unconvinced. To produce conviction, in the November elections of 1887 the question of division along the seventh standard parallel (about five miles south of 46° , north latitude) was submitted to the vote of the whole territory, with the result that while the majority of the whole vote cast was for division, more than half of the voters north of the line opposed it.²⁸ In the following session of Congress, the debate turned upon the meaning of this vote. Confirmed by the attitude of the northern half, the Democratic majority in the house of representatives was further pleased by the conduct of a convention at Aberdeen on December 15, 1887, which demanded single statehood.²⁹ Their relief, however, was diluted by the appearance of a manifesto addressed to the convention by W. M. Springer—"prepared by a very eminent personage to be used as a sort of executive message," as one of his critics alleged³⁰—which congratulated the convention upon its existence as the "first concerted movement on the part of the people of Dakota for single statehood."³¹

Early in 1888 the senate committee on territories, now headed by Orville H. Platt, of Connecticut,³² a New Englander without parochial views, gave favorable report to another Dakota-Lincoln bill similar to those which had already passed the senate in 1884 and 1886.³³ The debate on senate bill no. 185 (as this measure was named in the calendar) was stereotyped, perfunctory, and in a thin house. The senate had been through it too often to be greatly excited. The Democratic minority, unable to check the bill in the upper house, relied with confidence upon the determination reached by their party's caucus, in the house of repre-

²⁸ Tables, and a map showing the distribution of the vote, are in 50th Cong., 1st sess., *House Rep.* no. 1025, serial 2601, pp. 23, 27.

²⁹ The Aberdeen memorial is given in *Ibid.*, *Cong. Record*, Feb. 15, 1888, p. 1229. The text of the Springer letter is in *Ibid.*, *House Rep.* no. 1025, serial 2601, p. 32.

³⁰ Senator C. K. Davis, of Minnesota, *Ibid.*, *Cong. Record*, Apr. 11, 1888, p. 2886; cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 2833, 2834, 3135.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 2886.

³² L. A. Coolidge, *An Old-Fashioned Senator: Orville H. Platt of Connecticut* (N. Y., 1910), ch. 10.

³³ 50th Cong., 1st sess., *Sen. Rep.* no. 75, serial 2519, pp. 1-79.

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sentatives, to admit Dakota as a single state or not at all.³⁴ The obstructionists, as usual, professed to see a conspiracy to divide a territory against its will, to override self-government, and to pad the Republican electoral returns. The prophetic voice of Hiawatha was urged against the crime:³⁵

Then a dark and dreary vision
Passed before me, vague and cloud like,
I beheld our people *severed*,
All forgetful of my counsels,
Saw the remnants of our people
Weakened, warring with each other.

The advocates of the bill again exploited the undoubted development of the community, and pointed to the growing list of duplicated state institutions to which the Dakota legislature had given birth. Two universities at Grand Forks and Vermilion were already at work upon their grist of bachelors. With its usual ease the senate passed the bill; the house as usual failed to act.

While senate bill no. 185, for the admission of Dakota, remained in the house committee on territories, other projects came to bear it company and to demand statehood for southern territories as well as northern. Utah was perennial in its persistence, and remained excluded only through the unhappy accident of polygamy. New Mexico³⁶ and Arizona both had their adherents; while the name of Oklahoma was coming to recognition as the title of a future territory.³⁷ North of Utah, though Idaho³⁸ and Wyoming showed little sign of statehood life, both Montana and Washington were pressing after Dakota.

³⁴ The caucus resolution as printed in *Ibid*, *Cong. Record*, Apr. 16, 1888, p. 3002; cf. *Springfield (Mass.) Weekly Republican*, Apr. 13, 1888, p. 4.

³⁵ As cited by David Turpie of Indiana 50th Cong., 1st sess., *Cong. Record*, Apr. 12, 1888, pp. 2911. The passage in this form was more nearly pertinent than it would have been if correctly quoted.

³⁶ L. B. Prince, *New Mexico's Struggle for Statehood* (Santa Fe, 1910).

³⁷ Solon J. Buck, "The Settlement of Oklahoma," in *Trans. Wis. Acad.*, xv, pp. 325-380.

³⁸ John Hailey, *History of Idaho* (Boise, 1910).

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Washington's Aspirations

The territory of Washington, whose constitution of 1878 had received cold comfort at the national capital, felt the inspiration that came from railroad lines when the Northern Pacific began to build east from Wallula over its Pend Oreille division. In 1882 a bill for its admission got as far as a favorable report in the Republican house of representatives,³⁹ and in the following year it gained notoriety for itself by extending the suffrage to women. In 1885 the participation of its citizens in the anti-Chinese riots, which more specially discredited Wyoming, gave trouble to its advocates and was explained away laboriously in Congress.⁴⁰ But in 1886 an enabling act⁴¹ passed the senate under the patronage of Senators Dolph and Platt and the glamor of the name of "that grand man, Doctor Whitman,"⁴² only to be lost in the house with the Dakota bill of the same year. The annexation to Washington of the Idaho panhandle, which Hailey, the Idaho delegate, declared to have been "a bone of contention for the last twenty years,"⁴³ was contemplated in this bill. It was made the subject of a special act which at the next session passed both houses on its merits, but expired by pocket veto in the desk of President Cleveland. During 1887 and 1888 various bills for Washington were introduced and discussed, without a vote, and with slight hope of passage until the election of 1888 was over.

Montana

Montana lagged perceptibly behind Dakota and Washington. Its western end had been covered by mining camps and adver-

³⁹ 47th Cong., 1st sess., *House Rep.* no. 690, serial 2067.

⁴⁰ E. S. Meany, *History of the State of Washington* (N. Y., 1909), pp. 275-279. The documents concerning the riots were included in the annual report of Gov. Watson C. Squire, 49th Cong., 2d sess., *House Ex. Doc.* no. 1, serial 2468, pp. 866-915.

⁴¹ 49th Cong., 1st sess., *Sen. Rep.* no. 61, serial 2355.

⁴² The senate vote was 30 to 13, with 33 absent. 49th Cong., 1st sess., *Cong. Record*, pp. 2997, 3354.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 1707. The Coeur d'Alene mines, recently discovered in the panhandle, aroused movements for annexation in both Montana and Washington.

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tised by the last stand of the desperado before the vigilance committees, but had not developed before 1880 a permanent, taxable population of any consequence. With the progress of the Northern Pacific a visible change commenced. Cattlemen first, then farmers, entered the eastern region of the territory, while the rush of the Cœur d'Alene miners in 1883-84 revived the reputation of the mountainous West. A spontaneous constitution was framed at Helena in 1884,⁴⁴ signed by William A. Clark as president, and ratified by the people in the same year.

An unusual favor was accorded to the territory when in 1885 Cleveland appointed a resident, Samuel T. Hauser, as its governor.⁴⁵ Not all the carpet-baggers found occupation in the South—the West was full of them, and the plague increased as the offices of a prospective state came into view for needy politicians. One of the Dakota advocates complained:⁴⁶

Tradition informs us that the wise men all came from the East; and so our Republican friends, unwilling to depart from the teaching of the past, determined that history should repeat itself. Under Democratic supremacy we find that quite an invasion has been made upon what was supposed to be inflexible facts. Instead of the wise men coming from the East, we now learn that they come from the South. * * * Some of these hot-house specimens who were too frail to stand transplanting in a northern clime soon gave up their commissions and returned to the genial influences of their own civilization. Others, holding religiously to the doctrine that a Federal officer should neither die nor resign, staid with us, became acclimated, and promise in the years to come to develop into tolerably good and useful citizens.

⁴⁴ The constitution and memorial are in *Ibid*, *Sen. Misc. Doc.* no. 39, serial 2342. Cf. "Annual Report" of Gov. J. S. Crosby, 1884, in 48th Cong., 2d sess., *House Ex. Doc.* no. 1, serial 2287, p. 563. An elaborate speech on Montana was made by the territorial delegate, J. K. Toole, during the debate of 1889. 50th Cong., 2nd sess., *Cong. Record*, Jan. 15, 1889, pp. 820-829.

⁴⁵ W. H. Maguire, "Samuel T. Hauser: An Early Governor of Montana," in *Magazine of Western Hist.*, xiii, p. 589.

⁴⁶ 50th Cong., 2d sess., *Cong. Record*, Jan. 15, 1889, p. 821.

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Blocked by Party Tactics

Only once, in the twelve years after the admission of Colorado, did the Republicans control the government with that completeness which would have made it possible to enact their statehood laws. From 1881 to 1883 they had this power; but the continental railways were not yet done, most of the northern territories had not begun their startling growth, and the one good candidate was tainted with repudiation. After 1883 a Democratic house, or president, or both, could negate Republican schemes. Year after year close party balance forbade any gratuitous derangement of party lines. Democrats in both houses talked much of equity and popular desires, but were resolved to admit no Republican territory on the eve of a possible Democratic success in 1884, 1886, or 1888. In all the territories, population was increasing, state institutions were opening and expanding, universities were taking up their new public lands,⁴⁷ but territorial politics was a fatal defect in the Democratic mind. In vain the Democratic citizens of the applicant territories belabored their party friends in Congress. So long as that party had a chance to maintain or increase its power, so long as new states would endanger that chance, statehood ambitions failed of realization. Rarely did the obstructing leaders admit that they were playing politics; high principles flowed easily from their lips, but the nature of their arguments and quibbles gives their case away.

The bill for the admission of Dakota (which had passed the senate April 19, 1888) was pending in the house when the election of Benjamin Harrison as president of the United States, changed the whole territorial problem, and removed the basis of Democratic obstruction. "If these territories be not admitted this session," declared "Sunset" Cox, then terminating his long and prominent career, "they will surely be admitted under Republican auspices in the next Congress, and their poli-

⁴⁷ A bill making land grants to the territorial universities became a law Feb. 18, 1881. Progress in taking up the lands may be traced in the several governors' reports.

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tics will take the reflection of the friends who give them their early nurture.”⁴⁸

The Omnibus Bill

Recognizing this alteration in prospect, it became the desire of the Democrats, from the moment of the assembling of the last session of the Fiftieth Congress (December, 1888), to hasten the admission of the territories, and by hastening to control the result. As early as December 17, Springer reported a bill for not only the Republican territories of Dakota, Washington, and Montana, but for Democratic New Mexico as well.⁴⁹ The aim of Democratic strategy was to secure the admission of New Mexico, and to avert the division of Dakota, before the whole government was on March 4, 1889, handed over to the triumphant Republicans.

While Springer's bill, which soon was characterized as the "omnibus" bill, was in its early stages the house took up the senate bill of the previous session (no. 185), debated it in detail and then amended it to death. The amendment was no other than the "omnibus" bill for the admission of four states—Dakota, Montana, Washington, and New Mexico; and with this appendage the bill was returned, on January 19, to the house of its origin for reconsideration. But the senate could see the day of its deliverance from the control of the house. What it could not accomplish during its six years of servitude, it could easily bring to pass any time after March 4, 1889, and the house amendment only stirred it to renewed insistence. A Republican representative had already declared it to be "too late for the Democratic party to shield themselves from the wrath of the people due to their betrayal of their trust in the matter of the Territories, for lo these four full years of Democratic administration the Territory of Dakota has been ready for admission to the Union * * * She has been kept out of the Union because she is not barbarous and treacherous, nor Democratic * * * with the

⁴⁸ William Van Zandt Cox and Milton Harlow Northrup, *Life of Samuel Sullivan Cox* (Syracuse, 1899), p. 218.

⁴⁹ 50th Cong., 1st sess., *House Rep.* no. 1025, serial 2601, pp. 1-145.

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hope that the power of the Democratic party might be projected for four more years.”⁵⁰

On February 1, 1889, Platt reported adversely upon the Dakota bill as amended by the house, and the measure went to conference. Twice the conference committee found itself unable to agree, and twice it was ordered by each house to resume the conference, which reached a final report only on February 20. When the bill came to be read in its last form it was discovered that it remained an “omnibus,” though it had been freed of all of its Democratic features. Four states were still provided for, but the particular four marked a complete victory for the senate and the Republican party. New Mexico had disappeared. North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana, and Washington were, by the new bill which received the signature of Cleveland, February 22, 1889, authorized to prepare their constitutions and enter the Union. Political manœuvering defeated its own end. At any time between 1883 and 1888 the Democrats might probably have bargained New Mexico and Arizona against the inevitable Dakotas; now they had held out so long that they had nothing to offer and no strength with which to withstand the bludgeon of Republican success at the polls in 1888.

The Four States Admitted

On the fourth of July, in accordance with the terms of the “omnibus” act, constitutional conventions assembled at the capitals of all the territories designated in the law. They assembled also in Cheyenne and Boise, for Wyoming and Idaho. Discouraged in their ambition to be considered in the general bill, the people of the last-named territories still hoped that the Fifty-first Congress would be generous. Their work came easily to the last of the frontier conventions. Never have American citizens along the border shown weakness or an uncertain touch when called upon to draft a frame of government. Drawn by a selective process from the young, vigorous, and most progressive classes of the older states, each new state has filtered its ideas and institutions out of those of its forebears, while constitution-

⁵⁰ C. H. Grosvenor, of Ohio, in *Id.* 2d sess. *Cong. Record*, Jan. 17, 1889, App. p. 63.

Admission of the Omnibus States

making has been repeated so many times that parliamentary instincts are congenital throughout the West. The constitutions made during the summer of 1889 were, like those of their generation, long and detailed, approximating codes rather than fundamentals, offering striking documents in the momentous "case of the American People *versus* Themselves."

Admission came in the autumn of 1889. By the terms of the "omnibus" act the president of the United States was charged with the examination of the new constitutions, and was entrusted with discretionary power in proclaiming the admission of the states.⁵² On November 2 came North Dakota and South Dakota; Montana ⁵³ followed in a proclamation of November 8; Washington was declared a member of the Union on November 11. The confidence of Wyoming⁵⁴ and Idaho⁵⁵ was ultimately justified. Although as statehood propositions they could urge few arguments based either upon population or developed resources, they found Congress wearied with a prolonged debate and ready to wind up that portion of the business which might lead to a further strengthening of the Republican party.⁵⁶ Under the guidance of O. H. Platt both of the constitutions framed without sanction in 1889, were accepted. Idaho became a state by special act of July 3, 1890, while Wyoming was admitted by the same

⁵¹ Francis Newton Thorpe, "Washington and Montana. Have they made a Mistake in their Constitutions?" in *Century Magazine*, Feb., 1890, p. 508.

⁵² Platt had discussed the method of admission by proclamation, 49th Cong., 1st sess., *Cong. Record*, Apr. 1, 1886, p. 3001; favorable and adverse reports in the case of J. B. Belford, of Colorado, are in 44th Cong., 2d sess., *House Rep.* no. 67, serial 1769.

⁵³ An elaborate review of the Montana election occurred before the House Committee on Privileges and Elections. 51st Cong., 1st sess., *Sen. Rep.* no. 538, serial 2704, pp. 1-172.

⁵⁴ 50th Cong., 2d sess., *Sen. Rep.* no. 2695, serial 2619.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, *Sen. Rep.* No. 2691, serial 2619; 51st Cong., 1st sess., *Sen. Rep.* no. 316, serial 2704.

⁵⁶ Ineffective pleas for Arizona and New Mexico were made by their territorial delegates during the Idaho debate: Marcus A. Smith, Arizona, 50th Cong., 2d sess., *Cong. Record*, Apr. 2, 1890, p. 2944; Antonio Joseph, New Mexico, *Ibid*, p. 2991.

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process a week later.⁵⁷ "The Republican majority in the Senate will be increased * * * to fourteen, which it is hoped will prove large enough to offset any possible Democratic gains in that body for at least four years to come,"⁵⁸ lamented the *New York Nation*, which had already warned the Republicans that "either one of them is liable to become a Democratic state within a few years."⁵⁹

Conclusions

In no other twelve months in the history of the United States have six new states been added to the Union. That Congress should have dallied with them for years in the struggle for partisan advantage, is in no way surprising. The admission of new states has nearly always been a matter of political adjustment. But that over so wide an area, reasonable claims to statehood should have appeared at a single time, emphasizes the fact that the frontier had gone, that settlement was following new lines. Throughout the greater part of these new states, homes were out of reach. The familiar prairie wagon played small part in bringing in the population. Instead of this, development was arrested until railway access was obtained, and for a decade there flourished the rough and ready social life that has been photographed by Owen Wister in *The Virginian*. At the close of this period settlers, institutions, telephones, game laws, and politics entered with a rush, and change came instantaneously throughout the vast region. "Living men," writes the novelist in words of inspired accuracy, "Living men, not very old yet, have seen the Indian on the war-path, the buffalo stopping the train, the cow-boy driving his cattle, the herder watching his sheep, the government irrigation dam, and the automobile—have seen every one of these slides which progress puts for a moment into its magic-lantern and removes to replace with a new one."⁶⁰

⁵⁷ The texts of the various enabling acts, constitutions, and proclamations may be found in Francis Newton Thorpe (ed.), *Federal and State Constitutions, Colonial Charters, and other Organic Laws* (7 vols. Washington, 1909).

⁵⁸ *Nation*, July 10, 1890, p. 21.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, April 10, 1890, p. 287.

⁶⁰ Owen Wister, *Members of the Family* (N. Y., 1911), p. 9.

Admission of the Omnibus States

The delays occasioned by the nice balance of national parties held back the maturer territories until the newer had caught up, but had there been no obstruction, their admission could have been distributed over only a few more months. "Standing upon the thresholds of these young states, and in the morning of another century," Cox, the orator at Huron on July 4, 1889, had "glimpses of the far future of their destiny." Already he heard "the cheerful music of requited toil, inspiring the builders of new homes and the founders of new commonwealths." "Is it not probable," he asked his acquiescent hearers, "that in these new states, in the very heart of the continent, may be found the shining nucleus and the concentrated genius of the most miraculous progress known to human society?"⁶¹

More than 800,000 inhabitants were added during the eighties to these six states, raising their total population to 1,138,166. They settled chiefly at the extremes, Dakota alone having 511,527;⁶² yet along the whole line of the Northern Pacific their presence proved the validity of the statehood demand. In their universities and schools, their institutions and their opinions, they were the most intense of Americans.⁶³ Their participation in national government showed independence in theories and practice.

Twelve senators and seven representatives, all of them Republicans, were the first contribution of the new states to Congress. Trained by Republicans, their initial politics could hardly have been different. Yet a few far-sighted politicians, knowing the economic foundations of the West, doubted the submissive loyalty of these states to any party,⁶⁴ and were justified before the administration of Benjamin Harrison was ended. In their essential relations these states were ultra democratic, and unnatural allies of any party under suspicion of special privilege; they were, as every West has been, debtor communities,

⁶¹ *Life of Cox*, p. 220.

⁶² *Eleventh Census of the United States*, vol. "Population," 1, p. 2.

⁶³ P. F. McClure, "Dakota," in *Harper's Magazine*, Feb., 1889, pp. 347-364; Julian Ralph, "The Dakotas," in *Ibid*, May 1892, pp. 895-908.

⁶⁴ William V. Byars (ed.), *An American Commoner: Life and Times of Richard Parks Bland* (Columbia, Mo., 1900), p. 173.

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therefore a poor reliance for a party pledged by its history to fight inflation; their anti-corporation proclivities still further weakened their conviction of Republican perfection. Because of all these qualities, the "omnibus" states not only are a terminal post in the history of the expanding West, but mark a beginning in those party reorganizations that accompany the transition from the first American epoch to the next.

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